

Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all of the school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*, The staff, parents and Board of Management of St. Thomas Senior School has agreed the following child protection policy:

- 1) The Board of Management has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* as part of this overall child protection policy.
- 2) The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Ms. Eithne O Shea
- 3) The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Ms. Maire Moloney
- 4) In its policies, practices and activities, St. Thomas Senior School will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare. The school will:
 - recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
 - fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
 - adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
 - develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children; and
 - fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

The school will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult pupil with a special vulnerability.

- 5) The school policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to child protection are the Code of Behaviour Policy; Anti Bullying Policy; Health and Safety Policy; Induction Policy, Intimate Physical Care of Students Policy and Procedures, Garda Vetting Procedures; Procedures for Changing for Swimming/Games; IT Acceptable Use Policy, School Tours/Excursions Policy, Work Experience Policy

The Board has ensured that the necessary policies, protocols or practices as appropriate are in place in respect of each of the above listed items.

6) This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents on request. It is also available on school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

7.) This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 27/01/2012. It was reviewed on 06/09/2013, 03/10/2014, 11/09/2015 and on 29/09/2016

Signed: Mary Nolan
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed Cathie Mo.
Principal

Date: 29/9/2016.

Date: 29/9/2016.

Date of next review: September 2017

Good Practice - Prevention Procedures and Practices

Prevention – Curriculum Provision

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used in this school to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the school's SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection.

On enrolment of their child parents/guardians will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school and a copy of the Stay Safe 'A Parent's Guide' provided. They will also be informed that St. Thomas' S.N.S. has adopted both *The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* (DES) and *Children First- National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (DCYA, 2011) as school policy and consequently should there be a concern in relation to child protection the school will be obliged to contact the H.S.E.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two year cycle plan.

Because of their added vulnerability, children with special educational needs, will, as necessary have extra provision made for them by a member of the S.E.N. team. (See Stay Safe pack for children with learning difficulties)

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

Prior to the implementation of the Stay Safe programme, parents/guardians will be invited to attend an information meeting in the school.

Procedures - for dealing with concerns / disclosures

All staff, including teachers, SNAs, ancillary, secretarial, caretaking etc. in this school will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* (DES) and *Children First - National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of children* (DCYA, 2011). Individual copy of Chapters 2 and 3 from the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* (DES) are provided to each teacher.

- All concerns/disclosures involving child protection / child welfare issues will be reported in the first instance to the DLP (deputy DLP where DLP is unavailable).
- Each report to the DLP will be dated and signed by the person making that report.
- A strict adherence to maintaining confidentiality – information regarding concerns or disclosures of abuse should only be given on a 'need to know' basis.

Practice - best practice in child protection

The following areas have been considered by the staff and board of management of this school as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation, the staff and board of management have agreed that the following practices be adopted.

- a) **General conduct:** School personnel should never engage in or allow
- a. The use of inappropriate language or behaviours
 - b. Physical punishment of any kind
 - c. Sexually provocative games or sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
 - d. The use of sexually explicit or pornographic material

All media products (CDs, DVDs etc) should be checked for their appropriateness with regard to age and suitability.

- b) **Physical contact:** School personnel should avoid doing anything of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves. Physical contact between school personnel and the child should always be in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult. While physical contact may be used to comfort, reassure or assist a child the following should be factors in determining it's appropriateness
- a. It is acceptable to the child
 - b. It is open and not secretive
 - c. The age and developmental stage of the child
- c) **Visitors / Guest Speakers:** Visitors/guest speakers should never be left alone with pupils. The school (principal/teachers) has a responsibility to check out the credentials of the visitor/guest speaker and to ensure that the material in use by guests is appropriate.
- d) **Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs:** In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting / intimate care a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school, between parents / guardians, class teacher, special needs assistant, principal and if appropriate the pupil. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the specific needs of the child and to determine how the school can best meet those needs. The staff to be involved in this care will be identified and provision will be made for occasions when the particular staff member involved is absent. A written copy of what has been agreed will be made and kept in the child's file.

Two members of staff will be present when dealing with intimate care/ toileting needs. Any deviation from the agreed procedure will be recorded and notified to the DLP and the parents/guardians.

- e) **Toileting accidents:** If a child has a toileting accident the parent(s)/ guardian(s) will be notified immediately. Parents will be invited to bring a change of clothes to the school or bring child home to be washed and changed. If parents cannot be contacted, the child will be offered fresh clothing into which they can change.

If the pupil for whatever reason cannot clean or change themselves and the parents / guardians cannot be contacted the child will be assisted by members of staff familiar to the child. In all such situations two members of staff should be present. A record of all such incidents will be kept and the principal and parents will be notified.

- f) **One- to One teaching:** It is the policy in this school that one-to-one teaching is often in the best interest of the child. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment. Parents/Guardians of children who are to be involved in one-to-one teaching will be informed and their agreement sought. Work being carried out by special needs assistants will be carried out under the direction of the class teacher in an open environment.

- g) **Changing for Games / Swimming:** Pupils will be expected to dress and undress themselves for games/swimming. Where a child has special educational needs and where assistance is needed, this will be provided in the communal areas and with the consent of parents/guardians. Under no circumstances will members of staff/ volunteers be expected to or be allowed to dress/undress a child in a cubicle/private area. In such situations where privacy is required the parent/guardian of the child will be asked to assist the child.

At all times there must be adequate supervision of pupils.

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to principal and parents.